

Speeches to Inform

(Main Points, Supporting Materials, and Connectives)

What is your role?

Teacher, lecturer, coach, facilitator, instructor, guide, mentor, department manager, union leader, politician, educator, or any other role you may choose to assume as an *informer*.

What is your aim?

Your aim will be to convey knowledge and understanding that will be useful, and interesting to your audience. Your aim is to disseminate information, not to advocate a cause.

How will you be evaluated?

According to three general criteria:

- ❶ Is the information communicated *accurately*?
- ❷ Is the information communicated *clearly*?
- ❸ Is the information made *meaningful* and *interesting* to the audience?

How are informative speeches classified?

There are no hard-and-fast categories. There are many ways to classify speeches to inform. We shall focus on analyzing and organizing them with reference to what the speech is about.

What can be discussed in an informative speech?

Just about *anything*! Objects, processes, events, and concepts make-up the four basic types of speeches to inform.

Is *organization* important?

Yes, organization is vitally important to effective speechmaking. Listeners demand coherence. Studies indicate that *credibility*, *comprehension*, and *competence* are linked to the *organization* of a speech.

When and how do you develop a well-organized speech?

The process of organizing a speech begins when you determine the main points. To be well-organized the central features—the main points—of the speech must be carefully selected, precisely phrased, and strategically arranged.

How do you choose your main points?

By carefully noting how information is stated and grouped, or can be grouped, so you can take full advantage of natural *blocks* of information. If your topic can be naturally divided into two, three, four, or five groups (Cf., *types, reasons, methods, principles, advantages, beliefs, origins, practices, steps*, etc.), then your speech will have that same number of main points. If you select only some of those groups, you will most likely have the same amount of main points.

Sometimes it is not so easy to settle upon your main points. Sometimes choosing main points will be based upon discoveries you will make as you research and evaluate your findings.

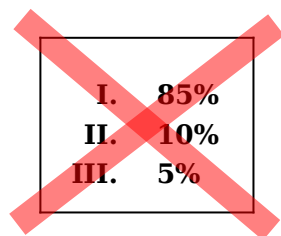
Regardless of your findings, be sure to limit/refine your number of main points for effective communication. When everything stands out, then nothing stands out. No matter how much time you have for your speech, if you have too many main points, your audience will have trouble sorting them out for importance and value. Aim to make a few points stand out and be remembered.

How should main points be prepared?

- ❶ Keep them separate/independent of each other.
- ❷ Use the same pattern of wording; or, phraseology.
- ❸ Balance the amount of time devoted to each main point.

Exactly equal amounts of time is not the goal. One of the following

examples would be fine:



I.	85%
II.	10%
III.	5%

I.	30%
II.	40%
III.	30%

I.	20%
II.	30%
III.	50%

How much time should be spent on each main point?

As you can see from the above diagrams, The amount of time may vary but it should be roughly balanced and not overly out of proportion. The final outcome does not however follow some pre-established pattern. The amount of time a speaker spends on each main point actually depends upon the *amount* and *complexity* of supporting materials for each point.

What are *supporting materials*?

They are the “flesh” that fills out the skeleton of a speech. The main points are only assertions and good speeches are not composed of just main points, for that would give the impression that the speech is nothing more than hot air and generalizations. Strong supporting materials are necessary to underscore the speaker’s point of view so listeners will be able to accept what the speaker says. Generalizations do not answer the three questions that listeners always mentally ask of a speaker: 1) “What do you mean?” 2) “Why should I believe you?” 3) And, “So what?” In other words, “Why is this information important for me to know?”

More specifically, supporting materials are of three basic types—**examples**, **statistics**, and **testimony**. The skillful use of supporting material can make or break a speech; it is so often the difference between a poor speech and a good one; supporting material causes a speech to come alive.

As supporting material, how are **examples** useful, why are they employed, and how are they used most effectively?

Research shows that vivid, concrete examples have more impact on listeners’ beliefs and actions than any other type of supporting material. Jesus Himself best illustrates this point. He constantly used *examples*—stories, parables, anecdotes, and dramatic demonstrations—to make abstract principles clear and compelling.

Examples can come in three basic kinds—brief examples (for a terse illustration of a point; to introduce a topic; or, piled on top of each other to create a desired impression and reinforce a speaker’s point of view), extended examples (Often called illustrations, narratives, and anecdotes, they tend to draw listeners into the speech and enhance ones ability to “hold an audience.”), and hypothetical examples (These are imaginary situations or embellished situations that are highly effective for the purpose of relating a general principle directly to an audience.).

They are used most effectively for the following reasons:

- ❶ To clarify unfamiliar or complex ideas
- ❷ To reinforce or prove a point
- ❸ To personalize or “humanize” concepts (People are

interested in

people. Therefore, human interest in a speech often is that

which

gives it life.)

Examples are used most effectively when they are life-like and rich with details. The more vivid a speaker’s examples, the more impact they are likely to have on an audience.

As supporting material, how are **statistics** useful, why are they employed, and how are they used most effectively?

Statistics are useful...

- ❶ To clarify or strengthen a speaker's position
- ❷ To show the magnitude or seriousness of an issue
- ❸ To persuade or convince an audience (Listeners may not

recall the

numbers or all the details but the overall impact will be that

what you

said was supported by an impressive array of statistics.)

- ❷ To give ideas numerical precision

Statistics are most effective when used sparingly, explained, rounded off, with visual aids, and their source is identified.

As supporting material, how is **testimony** useful, why is it employed, and how is it used most effectively?

Testimonies are used most effectively for the following reasons:

- ❶ To support ideas (cf. *expert testimony*, and *peer testimony*)
- ❷ To lend credibility to a speech
- ❸ To verify a common opinion, belief, or idea

When using testimony be sure to quote or paraphrase accurately (be careful of *context*). Also, be sure to use qualified, unbiased sources; and always identify the people you quote or paraphrase (be certain to establish his or her credibility if unknown to the audience).

How should *supporting materials* be *organized*?

Supporting materials should be *organized* so they are directly relevant to the main points they are supposed to support. Misplacing supportive material tends to cause confusion.

What is the third element in the body of a speech?

CONNECTIVES

What are connectives?

Connectives are words, phrases, clauses, sentences, or paragraphs that join one thought to another and indicate the relationship between them. They are the ligaments and tendons of a speech. Without them, speeches tend to be disjointed and uncoordinated. There are four types of connectives—transitions, internal previews, internal summaries, and signposts.

How might one describe transitions, internal previews, internal summaries, and signposts?

Transitions are word signals that indicate when a speaker has completed one thought and is moving to another.

Internal previews let the listener know what is coming next, are more detailed than transitions, and work like an introduction but come within the body of the speech. They are not always necessary but they should be used whenever they will help an audience keep track of a speaker's ideas.

Internal summaries remind listeners of what they have heard and are especially used when a speaker finishes a complicated or particularly important main point or set of points. They provide an excellent way to clarify and reinforce ideas and can help lead an audience smoothly in the next main point.

Signposts are brief statements that indicate where you are in the speech. Question can be effective signposts, because they invite subliminal answers that get the audience more involved in the speech. Signposts can also be used to focus attention on key ideas.

NOTE: Using transitions, internal previews, internal summaries, and signposts effectively will make your speeches more unified and coherent.